

Department of Veterans Affairs

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United States if it pertains to an identifiable individual and was transferred to the National Archives prior to September 27, 1975, as a record which has sufficient historical or other value to warrant its continued preservation by the United States Government. Such records are not subject to the provisions of 5 U.S.C. 552a except that a statement generally describing such records (modeled after the requirements relating to records subject to subsections (e)(4)(A) through (G) of 5 U.S.C. 552a) will be published in the FEDERAL REGISTER.

(j) The Department of Veterans Affairs will also, for the purposes of 5 U.S.C. 552a, consider that a record is maintained by the National Archives of the United States if it pertains to an identifiable individual and is transferred to the National Archives on or after September 27, 1975, as a record which has sufficient historical or other value to warrant its continued preservation by the United States Government. Such records are exempt from the requirements of 5 U.S.C. 552a except subsections (e)(4) (A) through (G) and (e)(9) thereof.

(Authority: 38 U.S.C. 501)

[40 FR 33944, Aug. 12, 1975, as amended at 40 FR 58644, Dec. 18, 1975; 47 FR 16323, Apr. 16, 1982]

§ 1.577 Access to records.

(a) Except as otherwise provided by law or regulation any individual upon request may gain access to his or her record or to any information pertaining to him or her which is contained in any system of records maintained by the Department of Veterans Affairs. The individual will be permitted, and upon his or her request, a person of his or her own choosing permitted to accompany him or her, to review the record and have a copy made of all or any portion thereof in a form comprehensible to him or her. The Department of Veterans Affairs will require, however, a written statement from the individual authorizing discussion of that individual's record in the accompanying person's presence.

(b) Any individual will be notified, upon request, if any Department of Veterans Affairs system of records

named contains a record pertaining to him or her. Such request must be in writing, over the signature of the requester. The request must contain a reasonable description of the Department of Veterans Affairs system or systems of records involved, as described at least annually by notice published in the FEDERAL REGISTER describing the existence and character of the Department of Veterans Affairs system or systems of records pursuant to § 1.578(d). The request should be made to the office concerned (having jurisdiction over the system or systems of records involved) or, if not known, to the Director or Department of Veterans Affairs Officer in the nearest Department of Veterans Affairs regional office, or to the Department of Veterans Affairs Central Office, 810 Vermont Avenue, NW., Washington, DC 20420. Personal contact should normally be made during the regular duty hours of the office concerned, which are 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday for Department of Veterans Affairs Central Office and most field facilities. Identification of the individual requesting the information will be required and will consist of the requester's name, signature, address, and claim, insurance or other identifying file number, if any, as a minimum. Additional identifying data or documents may be required in specified categories as determined by operating requirements and established and publicized by the promulgation of Department of Veterans Affairs regulations. (5 U.S.C. 552a(f)(1))

(c) The department or staff office having jurisdiction over the records involved will establish appropriate disclosure procedures and will notify the individual requesting disclosure of his or her record or information pertaining to him or her of the time, place and conditions under which the Department of Veterans Affairs will comply to the extent permitted by law and Department of Veterans Affairs regulation. (5 U.S.C. 552a(f)(2))

(d) Access to sensitive material in records, including medical and psychological records, is subject to the following special procedures. When an individual requests access to his or her records, the Department of Veterans Affairs official responsible for administering those records will review them and identify the presence of any sensitive records. Sensitive records are those that contain information which may have a serious adverse effect on the individual's mental or physical health if they are disclosed to him or her. If, on review of the records, the Department of Veterans Affairs official concludes that there are sensitive records involved, the official will refer the records to a Department of Veterans Affairs physician, other than a rating board physician, for further review. If the physician who reviews the records believes that disclosure of the information directly to the individual could have an adverse effect on the physical or mental health of the individual, the responsible Department of Veterans Affairs official will then advise the requesting individual: (1) That the Department of Veterans Affairs will disclose the sensitive records to a physician or other professional person selected by the requesting individual for such redisclosure as the professional person may believe is indicated, and (2) in indicated cases, that the Department of Veterans Affairs will arrange for the individual to report to a Department of Veterans Affairs facility for a discussion of his or her records with a designated Department of Vet-

erans Affairs physician and for an explanation of what is included in the records. Following such discussion, the records should be disclosed to the individual; however, in those extraordinary cases where a careful and conscientious explanation of the information considered harmful in the record has been made by a Department of Veterans Affairs physician and where it is still the physician's professional medical opinion that physical access to the information could be physically or mentally harmful to the patient, physical access may be denied. Such a denial situation should be an unusual, very infrequent occurrence. When denial of a request for direct physical access is made, the responsible Department of Veterans Affairs official will: (1) Promptly advise the individual making the request of the denial; (2) state the reasons for the denial of the request (e.g., 5 U.S.C. 552a(f)(3), 38 U.S.C. 5701(b)(1)); and (3) advise the requester that the denial may be appealed to the General Counsel and of the procedure for such an appeal.

(Authority: 5 U.S.C. 552a(f)(3))

(e) Nothing in 5 U.S.C. 552a, however, allows an individual access to any information compiled in reasonable anticipation of civil action or proceeding. (5 U.S.C. 552a(d)(5))

(f) Fees to be charged, if any, to any individual for making copies of his or her record shall not include the cost of any search for and review of the record, and will be as follows:

Activity	Fees
(1) Duplication of documents by any type of reproduction process to produce plain one-sided paper copies of a standard size (8½"×11"; 8½"×14"; 11"×14").	\$0.15 per page after first 100 one-sided pages.
(2) Duplication of non-paper records, such as microforms, audiovisual materials (motion pictures, slides, laser optical disks, video tapes, audio tapes, etc.), computer tapes and disks, diskettes for personal computers, and any other automated media output.	Actual direct cost to the Agency as defined in § 1.555(a)(2) of this part to the extent that it pertains to the cost of duplication.
(3) Duplication of document by any type of reproduction process not covered by paragraphs (f)(1) or (2) of this section to produce a copy in a form reasonably usable by the requester.	Actual direct cost to the Agency as defined in § 1.555(a)(2) of this part to the extent that it pertains to the cost of duplication.

NOTE.—Fees for any activities other than duplication by any type of reproducing process will be assessed under the provisions of § 1.526(i) or (j) of this part of any other applicable law.)

(g) When VA benefit records, which are retrievable by name or individual identifier of a VA beneficiary or applicant for VA benefits, are requested by

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the individual to whom the record pertains, the duplication fee for one complete set of such records will be waived. (Authority: 5 U.S.C. 552a(f)(5)) (38 U.S.C. 501)

[40 FR 33944, Aug. 12, 1975, as amended at 47 FR 16323, Apr. 16, 1982; 53 FR 10380, Mar. 31, 1988; 55 FR 21546, May 25, 1990]

§ 1.578 [Reserved]

§ 1.579 Amendment of records.

(a) Any individual may request amendment of any Department of Veterans Affairs record pertaining to him or her. Not later than 10 days (excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and legal public holidays) after the date or receipt of such request, the Department of Veterans Affairs will acknowledge in writing such receipt. The Department of Veterans Affairs will complete the review to amend or correct a record as soon as reasonably possible, normally within 30 days from the receipt of the request (excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and legal public holidays) unless unusual circumstances preclude completing action within that time. The Department of Veterans Affairs will promptly either:

(1) Correct any part thereof which the individual believes is not accurate, relevant, timely or complete; or

(2) Inform the individual of the Department of Veterans Affairs refusal to amend the record in accordance with his or her request, the reason for the refusal, the procedures by which the individual may request a review of that refusal by the Secretary or designee, and the name and address of such official.

(Authority: 5 U.S.C. 552a(d)(2))

(b) The administration or staff office having jurisdiction over the records involved will establish procedures for reviewing a request from an individual concerning the amendment of any record or information pertaining to the individual, for making a determination on the request, for an appeal within the Department of Veterans Affairs of an initial adverse Department of Veterans Affairs determination, and for whatever additional means may be necessary for each individual to be able to exercise fully, his or her right under 5 U.S.C. 552a.

(1) Headquarters officials designated as responsible for the amendment of records or information located in Central Office and under their jurisdiction include, but are not limited to: Secretary; Deputy Secretary, as well as other appropriate individuals responsible for the conduct of business within the various Department of Veterans Affairs administrations and staff offices. These officials will determine and advise the requester of the identifying information required to relate the request to the appropriate record, evaluate and grant or deny requests to amend, review initial adverse determinations upon request, and assist requesters desiring to amend or appeal initial adverse determinations or learn further of the provisions for judicial review.

(2) The following field officials are designated as responsible for the amendment of records or information located in facilities under their jurisdiction, as appropriate: The Director of each Center, Domiciliary, Medical Center, Outpatient Clinic, Regional Office, Supply Depot, and Regional Counsels. These officials will function in the same manner at field facilities as that specified in the preceding subparagraph for headquarters officials in Central Office.

(Authority: 5 U.S.C. 552a(f)(4))

(c) Any individual who disagrees with the Department of Veterans Affairs refusal to amend his or her record may request a review of such refusal. The Department of Veterans Affairs will complete such review not later than 30 days (excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and legal public holidays) from the date on which the individual request such review and make a final determination unless, for good cause shown, the Secretary extends such 30-day period. If, after review, the Secretary or designee also refuses to amend the record in accordance with the request the individual will be advised of the right to file with the Department of Veterans Affairs a concise statement setting forth the reasons for his or her disagreement with the Department of Veterans Affairs refusal and also advise of the provisions for judicial review of